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SUBJECT: CARTER CENTER OBSERVATIONS ON CHALLENGES TO THE PROVISIONAL
ELECTORAL LIST

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Observers from the Atlanta-based Carter Center who monitored the process of filing challenges to the provisional electoral list told the donor community that the nationwide distribution and posting of lists by the local independent electoral commissioners was very successful. However, a lack of clear instructions from the central Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) led to uneven treatment of cases in some centers. Due to the ongoing nature of the dispute process, the Carter Center does not intend to make its findings public and will instead engage directly with key players to recommend improvements to the electoral process. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) Six observers from the Carter Center and four representatives of the Electoral Institute of South Africa (EISA) worked together from November 27 to December 20 to observe the process of filing challenges to the provisional electoral list. The ten observers visited approximately 20% of all 415 local CEI coordination centers and covered 14 of Cote d'Ivoire's 19 regions.

¶3. (U) Carter Center observers noted that, although there were minor delays in distributing and posting the provisional electoral list around the country, in general, the distribution calendar was respected, and the operation was highly successful. They attributed this success to the empowerment of local CEI commissioners, who were given the financial and material resources necessary to do their job. For example, UNDP provided hammers, plywood sheets, and cash directly to local CEIs rather than relying on the central CEI in Abidjan for distribution. Carter Center Electoral Expert Michel Paternotre said that the success of this operation bodes well for election day, which will also entail significant logistical efforts to distribute ballots, ballot boxes, ink, and other electoral material.

¶4. (U) Observers were concerned, however, with "significant variations" in how individual centers processed challenges to the lists. To cite one example, some centers accepted yellow national identity cards as proof of identity, while others did not, since there were no clear instructions from the central CEI. [Note: there have been several different forms (and colors) of national identity cards, each corresponding to a different government attempt to resolve the ID issue.] Observers noted, however, that nearly all variations in treatment of cases were a result of different interpretations of vague instructions. Due to these variations, the Carter Center cited wide disparities in official CEI statistics on the number of processed, approved, and/or rejected cases. Observers did not believe that any of the CEI decisions were discriminatory in nature or intended to favor one ethnic or political group over another.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Although the Carter Center briefed the international donor community in Abidjan, it does not intend to

release a public report. Carter Center Representative Sabina Vigani explained that, because judges are still reviewing dispute cases, the Center was concerned that its report might be used as a political tool - particularly if it was released before the dispute process concluded. [Note: UNOCI reported on January 22 that the CEI has agreed to extend the electoral list dispute period until February 4.] The Carter Center will instead reach out to key players directly to share observers' recommendations in private discussions.

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